

## **Public Library District of Columbia**

### **PUBLIC INTERNET ACCESS POLICY**

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#### **Introductory comments from the Board of Library Trustees:**

The District of Columbia Public Library, like public libraries throughout the US, increasingly delivers information to library users through technology – by acquiring digital versions of newspapers and magazines, by leasing online databases, by providing full text downloadable books, and by providing Internet access. While the Internet connects each of us to unimaginable amounts of information, its use has presented the Library with issues that we must address.

Increasingly the Board has heard from adult library users and from library staff that they are offended by the display of explicit sexual images they encounter in the Library. Parents have said they are concerned having their children at the library because of what they have seen on the computers.

The Board therefore sees the pressing need to restructure the Public Use of the Internet Policy. We have chosen a policy that respects library users' right to access constitutionally protected legal materials on the Internet and that makes the Library a welcoming community space for children and families. It is in essence a new social contract for use of public space in the Library.

We believe the District of Columbia Public Library is a vital component of lifelong learning in our City, and for many residents the Library is their only source of access to the Internet. As Library Trustees, our obligation is to create a policy that best serves the needs of our users.

#### **POLICY STATEMENT: PUBLIC USE OF THE INTERNET**

The District of Columbia Public Library affirms the principles of intellectual freedom and access to constitutionally protected speech. The Library provides access to a broad range of information resources including those available through the Internet. The Library makes this service available to fulfill its mission of providing free and open access to information for library users of all ages and backgrounds.

The Internet is a global network of communication linkages to a vast and diverse array of information content. The Library does not control the information and is not responsible for the content. While users often find quickly information that is exactly what they need, users should realize that information on the Internet may be incorrect, out-of-date, offensive, or illegal.

#### **Library Users' Rights**

Users have the right to access, express, and receive constitutionally protected speech.

Though the Library provides access, this should not be interpreted as an endorsement as some information accessed on the Internet may not meet the Library's selection policy.

Each user is left to determine what is appropriate. Parents and legal guardians should provide guidance to their own children as they are the only ones with the right and responsibility to do so.

### **Filtering Software**

Based on a review of computer use at DCPL libraries and public comments, the Library Board policy is to provide filtered access to the Internet.

The filtering software will block visual depictions that are obscene, materials that are considered pornographic, as well as materials that are harmful to minors. The Library also blocks access to gambling sites on the Internet, as they are not constitutionally protected, and it blocks access to child pornography as it is illegal.

Users should be aware that filtering software is not a substitute for individual judgment and parental involvement and supervision of their children. The software may overblock – deny access to sites that have legitimate research value or underblock—fail to block objectionable content.

With this policy, the Library is compliant with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

### **UNFILTERED ACCESS FOR PERSONS 17 Years of Age or OLDER**

The Library Board affirms the right to access constitutionally protected speech. Persons 17 years of age and older may request unfiltered access to the blocked content. The Library has chosen 17 years of age and older as it is the age specified in the Children’s Internet Protection Act as appropriate for unfiltered access. A user making such a request may be asked for identification to confirm the user is 17 years of age or older. The Library designates a specific limited number of computers in each of its locations for unfiltered Internet access. Users who request such access will be directed to or relocated to those computers. If none are available at the time of request, the user will have to wait until a designated computer is available.

### **Responsibilities of Users**

Library users must respect and comply with US copyright law and all other applicable laws.

Library users must use the Library’s access to the Internet for legal purposes only.

Library users may not use the Library’s public computers to gain unauthorized access to any computing, information, or communications devices or resources.

Library users may not damage, alter, or degrade computer equipment, software, configurations; and may not install software applications.